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ABSTRACT

This speech described the development and current status of the Canada NewStart Program, in which specially created corporations have been conducting action research on disadvantaged groups (largely Indians and Metis) in remote areas of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, and for undereducated persons in economically depressed areas of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. This research effort in adult education and the behavioral and social sciences was defined as "active, deliberate intervention to study or facilitate behavior change." Critical evaluations of the organizational model, research problems, and the formation and maintenance of competent interdisciplinary teams, were set forth. (Three references are included.) (LY)

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NEWSTART PROGRAM

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THE CANADA NEWSTART PROGRAM

E.P. Sloan

The purpose of this paper is to describe the development and the present status of the Canada NewStart Program. We shall discuss briefly the historical background of the program; its underlying rationale and objectives; its organizational structure; its implementation and operation; and some of the unique and innovative features of the program. Finally we propose to discuss what we have learned from this experience to date.

In presenting this paper to a CCRE/CERA audience we recognize certain risks. We propose to take some liberties with the terms "education" and "research" and use them in their broadest possible sense. Education is considered to embrace all those activities designed to stimulate and direct human learning. Research is considered to include any systematic, pre-planned attempt to increase knowledge and understanding. If these non-definitions are acceptable, The Canada NewStart Program can be viewed as an important contribution to "educational research".

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Canada NewStart Program is a deliberate attempt to seek better methods for attacking the massive problems of poverty, unemployment, underemployment, and human resource development which must be solved if Canada is to achieve its potential of economic and social "equality of opportunity" for its citizens. It emerged in response to the obvious need for more and better knowledge about how the 30% of Canadians who live below the so-called poverty line can be most effectively helped.

At the federal-provincial conference held in July 1965 Prime Minister Pearson proposed the selection of a few designated areas for "special pilot projects". In presenting the proposal he stated "This would be in effect an intensive effort in practical research designed to determine the best methods of meeting the training needs of adults in designated areas." Mr. Pearson further stated "the federal government believes that this kind of experiment is essential to developing the improvements in manpower policies which the Economic Council of Canada has emphasized are essential if we are to realize the potentialities of our economy."

RATIONALE

This decision to establish "pilot training projects" was an acknowledgement of significant gaps in existing development and manpower programs. It recognized that a large proportion of Canada's population were "disadvantaged". For reasons which were poorly understood, the education, social and economic systems had failed to assimilate them and carry them with the majority of Canadians into the affluence of the 1960's. It was also apparent that the remedial prescriptions of rural development, occupational training, retraining and mobility support were having no significant impact on this large group of Canadian citizens.

It was implicit in this decision that, before massive amounts of money and resources were committed to large scale economic and social development programs, a relatively small amount would be invested in "practical research" to determine which were the best ways to invest the larger sums of money. Experience in the United States had shown clearly the need for systematic research and evaluation on many human and social problems before large scale operating programs were launched. By systematically investigating the "gap areas" in human resource development, the Canadian government hoped to develop, test and evaluate methods which could be used in large scale programs.

OBJECTIVES

Thus from the outset the objectives of the Canada NewStart Program were research objectives - the production of increased and improved knowledge about the problems of disadvantaged Canadians and about the value of alternative solutions to these problems. This approach also recognized that the required research could not be carried out in Ottawa or in the isolation of university laboratories. It had to be done in the relatively remote areas of Canada where significant numbers of the disadvantaged live with their complex and multiple problems and in the context of their socio-economic environment. It also recognized that no one discipline could solve the problems and that an inter-disciplinary approach would be needed. The NewStart concept represented a novel approach by the federal government to sponsor and support applied research in adult education and in the behavioural and social sciences on a significant scale.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

One of the unique features of the Canada NewStart Program was the organizational model which was endorsed by the federal and the provincial governments as a mechanism for implementing the program. The structure chosen was that of a private non-profit corporation established under the Societies Act of the province within which each such program was to operate.

It was recognized that to function effectively as field research units these agencies must be free from the bureaucratic constraints of federal and provincial governments. The ability to compete in the professional labour market, to establish and maintain competent inter-disciplinary research teams, and to attract to remote areas the type of imaginative, creative, and innovative staff required was essential to the success of the program. So also was the freedom to make decisions on priorities,

commitments, and program changes without reference to higher authority. The autonomy of a private corporation was also expected to provide greater access to the policy and decision-making levels of the sponsoring provincial and federal departments, to private industrial and commercial enterprises, and to professional associations and labour organizations.

Each NewStart Corporation is owned jointly and equally by the federal government and the appropriate provincial government. Each Corporation has a five man Board of Directors, including a full time Executive Director, who are jointly appointed by the two governments and are fully responsible for the operation of the Corporation. The Executive Director is the chief executive officer of the Corporation responsible to the Board of Directors for day to day operation and management.

Under the federal-provincial agreements which cover the program, the federal government is responsible for financing up to 100% of each NewStart Corporation's operation. On incorporation, each Corporation is provided an initial planning grant and further operating grants are made annually on receipt and approval of a program plan and budget for the ensuing year. The Corporation is accountable for its funds to the federal government and its records are subject to audit by the Auditor General of Canada. These provisions do not prevent the Corporations from entering into contractual agreements with provincial governments or other agencies which involve the provision of additional funds or resources. Each Corporation is assured of an operating life of three full years with additional periods of six months to a year for setting up and initial planning, and for phase-out and completion of evaluation and reporting.

At the federal level a small administrative staff was established to negotiate the necessary agreements with the provinces, to recruit Executive Directors for each Corporation, and to provide administrative, legal, and financial support to the Corporations. The federal government

also established a Technical Support Centre to provide professional and technical advice and support to the Corporations in the development of programs and in the application of research design and evaluation techniques. These two sections were established in 1966 as the Experimental Projects Branch in the Department of Manpower and Immigration. This Branch was later transferred, with the responsibility for the Canada NewStart Program, to the Department of Regional Economic Expansion.

This organizational model is a modified form of what Alan Pifer, President of the Carnegie Corporation, has called "quasi nongovernmental organizations". Pifer (1967) discusses the recent proliferation of such organizations in the United States and predicts a considerable growth of this type of institution in the future. He points out that in every instance where such an organization has been formed in the U.S. the basic reason was that "An urgent national need had been identified that no other institution in the society was meeting, or seemingly, could meet". The example most familiar to educators is probably that of the regional educational laboratories in the U.S.A. The Canada NewStart model is perhaps more comparable to those of the Job Corps Program and the Community Action Program in that it was directed at specific areas and target populations. The emphasis on research objectives and the orientation toward rural areas were features of the NewStart Program which made it different from these American programs.

Thus the essential characteristics of the NewStart model are:

1. Autonomous non-profit private corporations (Quasi Non-governmental Organizations) established in areas selected because of manifest problems of economic stagnation and significant disadvantaged populations.
2. Federal-provincial joint sponsorship as equal partners and co-owners of the Corporations.

3. Up to 100% financial support from the Federal Government.
4. Research objectives with a mandate to diagnose, define, and investigate the problems of the disadvantaged and to experiment, innovate, and evaluate in the search for solutions to these problems.

IMPLEMENTATION

Once the necessary agreements had been reached with the provinces, action was taken to set the Canada NewStart Program in motion as quickly as possible. On October 1, 1966 the Experimental Projects Branch was established in the Department of Manpower and Immigration and the Director and Assistant Director were appointed. In March of 1967 all ten provinces were invited to submit proposals on NewStart areas for discussion. In April and May of 1967 the first professional consultant staff was appointed to the Technical Support Centre. Agreements were signed with four provinces (Nova Scotia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Prince Edward Island), the first four NewStart Corporations were formed and the Executive Directors were appointed during July and August. In September an orientation course for the Executive Directors was held in Ottawa and they were directed to produce plans and budgets for 1968 operations before the end of 1967.

In retrospect, this timetable of events appears quite unrealistic. There is no question that a certain amount of pressure is essential if a program of this nature is not to become bogged down in endless abstract planning without commitment to action.

There is equally no question that the complexities and difficulties involved in recruiting professional staff to work in isolated areas on a high-risk short-term venture and of integrating them into effective inter-disciplinary teams for action-research were grossly underestimated.

Because of this implementation timetable the NewStart Corporations were forced to submit plans and budgets based on limited data about their areas and target populations. The original planning was done in every instance without the participation of a research professional in the core staff planning team. As a result these initial plans were essentially for "action" programs without adequate research design or evaluation provisions. They did contain many imaginative and innovative approaches and they were approved on the expectation that programs designs could be improved and refined before implementation.

To make the NewStart concept a reality many decisions had to be made in the early implementation stages. Because there was no directly comparable experience to draw upon, these decisions were based on assumptions, estimates, and "best guesses". The first two years were expended largely in organizing the corporations, in conducting exploratory studies, in accumulating data about the area and the target populations, and in defining questions and hypotheses for systematic investigation.

PRESENT SITUATION

There are now six NewStart Corporations in operation. Their location is shown in Figure 1. Of these six, four: Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan and Alberta, were established in 1967 and they will commence phase-out of their operations on April 1, 1971. Manitoba and New Brunswick were established during 1969 and are just completing their initial planning period.

The areas in which these Corporations are experimenting, which were selected on the basis of federal-provincial discussions, reflect a variety of economic and social conditions. With the exception of Saskatchewan NewStart, which is located in Prince Albert, they are all rural. Total population ranges from about 16,000 in the largest area,

Alberta, to about 28,000 in the smallest area, Prince Albert. Those in the east are characterized by economic stagnation or slow growth, population decline, dependence on primary industries, and chronic high unemployment and underemployment. Many of the people of these areas are disadvantaged in terms of education and work experience, they are frequently ineligible or unable to take advantage of skill training courses which are available, and are unqualified for employment in any but the most unskilled jobs. In the western NewStart areas a large proportion of the target population are Indian and Métis. In contrast to the eastern areas, the northern prairies are experiencing a period of development and economic growth. The problem in the west is to prepare the native peoples for those jobs which will become available so that they are not by-passed in favour of labour imported from other areas.

PROGRAMS

The NewStart programs are all different. The differences result from conditions in the local area, composition of the target population and the needs of various sub-groups of this population, and from the philosophy, interests and capabilities of the NewStart staff. At the same time all of the existing programs and those being planned have certain common components and elements. All contain Adult Basic Education programs, some form of Basic Life Skills, some form of occupational training, individual and family counselling, and community development. From the initial emphasis on labour force development and occupational training the Canada NewStart Program has progressively evolved to encompass all aspects of human resource development. This comprehensive approach is in recognition of the fact that Canada's disadvantaged are multi-problem individuals and groups and that much more than occupational training will be needed for their social and economic rehabilitation.

Current programs include an extremely wide range of activities from the operation of a fishing trawler to train fishermen in Nova Scotia to the operation of mobile "bush" schools for the upgrading of the family as a unit in isolated communities of Northern Alberta. In Saskatchewan, emphasis has been placed on the development of materials for use in social development, basic education, and occupational training and placement of para-professional aides. Prince Edward Island NewStart has developed a prototype manpower development program which is specifically designed to meet the needs of the Island in terms of the long-range development plan announced last summer. In Kent County, New Brunswick NewStart will address itself to the development and testing of adult educational materials for the majority Acadian population of that area. Manitoba NewStart, recently established in The Pas, is developing programs to prepare the native peoples of the area to participate in and benefit from the developments which are planned in Northern Manitoba.

At a more specific level each Corporation has undertaken to evaluate one or more of the Adult Basic Education program packages which are now available. Nova Scotia is using the L100 multi-media program of the Educational Development Laboratories (EDL) in their experimental program in reading. Prince Edward Island NewStart is using the Method of Intellectual Development (MIND) machine-tape program for communication and computational upgrading in a first-generation exploratory study and will evaluate a Canadian adaptation of this tape-centred program during the next year. Saskatchewan NewStart has developed an integrated program using their Life Skills Program, the Sullivan Series of programmed materials, and the General Learning Corporation's High School Equivalency program. Their present program includes an evaluation of the Initial Teaching Alphabet (I.T.A.) program for use with illiterate adults. Alberta has used the Mott materials, MIND programs and multi-media multi-mode approach to basic

education upgrading. We hope that from these experiments we will obtain practical information on the relative strengths and weaknesses of these various programs and about their suitability for the kinds of populations with which we have been dealing.

STATUS REPORT

On the basis of this sketchy description of the Canada NewStart Program I would like to turn now to the question "What have we learned from this experience?" I fear that "what we have learned" will seem all too familiar to those of you who are conversant with the current action-research and war on poverty literature from the U.S. While we were familiar with the early results of these programs and tried to avoid some of the obvious pitfalls, there seems to be an unavoidable pattern of sequential development through which action-research programs must progress. Evaluation of this experience in any final sense is premature at this time.

On the other hand, the Canada NewStart Program has been a unique attempt to innovate in methods of conducting "practical research". As such it may provide some guidelines for others who may be involved in organizing or operating similar types of programs.

We shall not attempt to present any research findings on specific target populations or on experimental process studies. These will be the subject of reports and papers published by the individual NewStart Corporations. The subject of Evaluation in NewStart will be adequately dealt with by our colleagues from Nova Scotia NewStart in the second presentation of this session. Let us examine briefly, then, our preliminary findings under the following headings: Model, Concept, Research and People.

The Organizational Model

What have we learned from the Canada NewStart Program about the "Quasi Nongovernmental Organization" as a model for the conduct of "Research and Development" in Canada? To this question we have only a partial answer. In areas where there are federal-provincial constitutional and jurisdictional problems it offers a solution to some of the difficulties of federal-provincial co-operation. In Canada these areas would include education, welfare, manpower development and training, and problems associated with the native peoples. Particularly in these areas it would seem to be an appropriate model for Canada.

The autonomous non-profit private corporation has many advantages over the regular government department or agency. Because it is functionally autonomous, decisions can be made quickly without referral to higher authority. Staff can be hired (and fired) on the basis of professional suitability and availability. Salaries and allowances can be adjusted to meet the professional market rates and to compensate for the practical difficulties of housing, isolation, etc., which characterize the project areas. Within the limits of the approved budgets, the corporation can adjust programs and priorities to meet local conditions. As a non-governmental organization it deals directly and effectively with different levels of government and with such public and private organizations as school boards, welfare agencies, industry, unions and professional associations. The NewStart Corporations are unanimous in their support of the autonomy and flexibility inherent in this form of organization.

At the same time there have been problems with the NewStart organizational model. One particular difficulty has been the definition of the level of autonomy and authority which can be realistically granted to such agencies. Autonomy has been most jealously guarded in those areas where

staff capabilities are considered adequate, whereas direction and control have been invited in those areas where internal staff deficiencies existed. These areas have seldom coincided with the areas of expertise available in the central co-ordinating agency. In some cases autonomy and freedom "to do his own thing" has been a frightening experience for the individual who has come from a well structured environment where there was always someone available to make decisions and who could be blamed when the decision proved wrong. With autonomy or freedom comes responsibility and the individual must be prepared to accept the consequences of his actions.

In discussing such organizations in the U.S.A. Pifer (1967) states that the most difficult problem is "how to reconcile its dual needs for independence and accountability" (for public funds). His conclusion is that this form of corporate structure does work and will be used extensively in the future to conduct governmental programs in social welfare, and economic and social development both within the U.S.A. and abroad. In Canada the model requires further study and development if it is to meet the peculiar needs of federal-provincial or more appropriately now federal-regional development programs where several provinces may be involved rather than one.

The Concept

Our efforts through NewStart have confirmed the validity of the original concept. There is an urgent and continuing need to learn more about the personal, social and cultural dimensions of deprivation and poverty. The complexity of the problems, their differential composition and structure in different parts of Canada, and the dynamic interrelationships which determine the specifics of an individual's status at a particular time and place are poorly understood. Decisions affecting the disadvantaged are made on the basis of morality, untested assumptions, and unquestioned tradition rather than on hard evidence and rational thinking. Until the hard

evidence is produced through systematic research this will continue to happen. The locus of research must shift from the University setting to the real life situation if this evidence is to be produced in a form which has meaning to decision makers.

In a sense perhaps the NewStart concept was too good. Williams and Evans (1969) point out that Headstart was first designed as a small scale experimental program in the U.S. It had so much appeal at the height of the War on Poverty hysteria that it expanded to a national action program costing \$100 million before any attempt was made to test and evaluate the idea. The expansion of the program to satisfy political and public pressure before its rationale and its structure had been pre-tested foredoomed it to failure. The problem now is to determine post-hoc why some of the programs were effective and speculate about the determinants of success and failure. This will lead to hypotheses which should be tested - possibly the same hypotheses that were to be systematically investigated in the experimental small scale study originally conceived.

NewStart in its small way illustrates one of Canada's basic problems. In its relations with the provinces the federal government has, until recently, maintained a policy of equal treatment for all. The ideal solution in terms of this policy would have been to start ten NewStart Corporations simultaneously and to ensure that each received exactly the same amount of money. This kind of solution bears no relation to the reality of Canada or to rational processes of development in new and difficult undertakings.

In fact, in the Canadian tradition, all ten provincial governments were invited to present proposals for NewStart programs in 1967. Only four proposals led to agreements in that year and two have since been negotiated. Even the limited task of setting up four

Corporations simultaneously has led to serious problems. It would have been much more rational to start with one NewStart Corporation in one province or region as a pilot project to test the feasibility of the concept, to determine the problems associated with this new kind of activity, and to learn through doing at a moderate level of commitment and expenditure. Canada with its limited resources of money and manpower cannot afford the luxury of universal simultaneous implementation of every good idea on the basis of political rather than rational distribution. It would surely have been better to establish one well staffed, well planned and well financed research agency, perhaps in the Atlantic Region, in the first instance. When the first unit was fully operating a second might be established in the Prairie Region and others on an as-needed priority basis. This hopefully is how future programs of this type will be developed under the philosophy of regional development and under the aegis of the new federal Department of Regional Economic Expansion.

Research

What have we learned about research through the NewStart program?

I think the most important thing we have learned about research has to do with the use of the term itself. Research has become one of our most over-used words and has lost its value as a result. In the history of NewStart we started with the term "practical research" which was taken to include experimental and pilot projects undertaken to field test innovative and novel approaches to a particular set of problems. Later the term action-research became quite popular and was adopted as descriptive of NewStart. More recently the "in" terms have become evaluation and evaluation research. Other terms like operations research and systems research crop up occasionally.

Unfortunately the concept of research is but vaguely if at all understood by the man on the street. To the disadvantaged who live in poverty it frequently means more high salaried middle class people doing surveys, asking questions, and studying them as guinea pigs. They in particular are not interested in participating in research programs which in their experience have no pay-off for them. They want action. They are frequently supported in this by community leaders and "members of the establishment" whose main concern is that some federal money be spent and the more and quicker the better. The emphasis on NewStart as a "research" program has had some of these unfortunate consequences. At the same time it was essential to emphasize that its function was not to tackle all of the problems of an area or to train all of the disadvantaged people of the area.

We have "discovered" also that the term research means different things to people trained in different disciplines and in some cases to people trained in the same discipline but in different schools or even departments within a school. We speak of inter-disciplinary research teams which include educators, educational, social and clinical psychologists, economists, sociologists, anthropologists, and social workers. Each of these disciplines has its own standards, principles, methodologies and ethics for conducting research.

The essential nature of NewStart research is active, deliberate intervention to study or facilitate behaviour change. As such it must be done in the field with those people whose behaviour it is desired to change. There are risks attached and there are moral and ethical principles involved. Intervention as a legitimate research strategy with real people is familiar in education and psychology but less so in sociology and anthropology and economics. Social workers and counsellors practice intervention but their "client-problem" orientation frequently conflicts with research objectives.

Life in the NewStart Program might have been simpler if we had at the outset adopted the term "Experimental and Demonstration Projects". Jones (1966) classifies the various E and D projects sponsored by the U.S. Department of Labor under four headings: experimental projects; demonstration projects; pilot projects; and developmental projects. Each of these has specific requirements in terms of research design and evaluation procedures. This might have avoided misunderstanding and unrealistic expectation on the part of both staff and clientele.

We have also "learned" that research (however hyphenated or qualified) of the type that NewStart engages in does not take place in a vacuum. Action-research requires action and where there is no action some must be started. The areas selected for NewStart were significantly devoid of action, of research facilities such as computers, libraries, etc., of professional staff, of office and housing accommodation and a host of other amenities essential or desirable for the conduct of such a program. That six such Corporations now exist and are operating at progressively more productive levels is itself no mean achievement. We have also learned that this planning and development takes approximately two years. Whatever other descriptive objectives we may legitimately use there is no such thing as "instant" research.

People

What have we learned about people in the NewStart Program?

Here again we have "learned" some very important self-evident truths about people. None of this knowledge is new but it bears repeating for the sake of those who may venture into similar unfamiliar territory. Eli Ginsberg (1969) has said, "Professionals are city folk. They are disinclined to settle on the frontier." While he was speaking about the future we can testify to the validity of his statement with respect to the

NewStart program. There has been a striking lack of interest and commitment to social action programs on the part of Canadian professionals. Admittedly, NewStart is a short-term high risk venture. This does not explain, however, why five of the six Research Directors in the NewStart Corporations are United States citizens and received their training and experience in that country. A year was wasted and many dollars too, in the attempt to recruit for these positions in Canada.

We have touched upon the problems of the formation and maintenance of competent inter-disciplinary teams. The essential problem here has been to find staff trained in different social sciences and education who effectively complement each other and can work together as members of a team. Where this has happened it has generated productive interaction and led to new concepts and ideas. Our initial conclusion is that true inter-disciplinary productivity develops slowly. Narrow disciplinary orientations, differences in terminology, concepts, and methodology, all of which are perpetuated and accentuated by the educational system, are in reality artificial but important barriers to this process. The emergence of graduate programs which are truly inter-disciplinary and the increasing number of inter-disciplinary research institutes will gradually break down these barriers. Action-research programs such as NewStart will also contribute and accelerate the development of true inter-disciplinary research competence.

NewStart has experienced the seemingly inevitable confrontation between action oriented program personnel and research staff. The action-research concept and context is particularly susceptible to this malaise. In the original four Corporations this has been attributed to the absence of research staff and the emphasis on action during their initial development and planning phase. We are watching very closely the dynamics which develop when research oriented staff participate in and to some extent

control the initial planning of programs. My personal hunch is that this problem is similar to that of forming inter-disciplinary research teams. It requires compromise, mutual understanding, and deliberate, positive action to promote and maintain the necessary co-operative effort. Most of all, the essential team-work takes time to develop and mature.

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have tried to convey to you some understanding of the Canada NewStart Program. I have been extremely candid in expressing my opinions and assessment of the Program. I have tended to stress, perhaps to over emphasize, the problems, errors, and shortcomings of various aspects of the program. I firmly believe that in spite of its many limitations the Canada NewStart Program will have a very significant impact on the direction of future social and economic development in Canada.

Products in the form of practical experience, new information, new applications and adaptations of existing materials and methods, and new products are only now starting to appear. Perhaps more important, Canada will have a significant cadre of professional, sub-professional, and support people who have come face to face with the disadvantaged and their problems and who will speak and act on the basis of actual experience and knowledge. They may also have a significant impact on future education and on national and regional programs.

This paper is based on the usual 20/20 hindsight vision of the researcher. There is no criticism intended of those who conceived, planned, implemented or participated in the Canada NewStart Program. It is an attempt to record and to share with you some of the things which we have learned in the expectation that future efforts of this nature will be better because of this experience. What we need now is the opportunity to use what has been learned.

Thank you.

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